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INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

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ASSESSMENT NEWS

Learner-Centered Teaching and Assessment

By: Debra Anderson

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How many times have you caught yourself thinking, "I am working ten times harder than the students enrolled in the course I am teaching"? Last fall, my understanding of comparative vertebrate anatomy deepened as I used an integrated approach to presenting content in lecture. However, the primary goal, to reorganize the material in order to promote the students' understanding of (not for me to better understand the material), was not met. I learned more, but they didn't despite my hard work.

This was my mindset when I came across a wonderful book at the 2003 Assessment Institute Conference in Indianapolis entitled Learner-Centered Assessment on College Campuses: Shifting the Focus From Teaching to Learning, by Mary E. Huba and Jann E. Freed, 2000. As I scanned the book between sessions at the conference, I came across several significant phrases: "... the individuals learning the most in this classroom are the professors. They have reserved for themselves the very conditions that promote learning: actively seeking new information, integrating it with what is known, organizing it in a meaningful way, and having a chance to explain it to others." (p. 35)

This is exactly what I was experiencing. I quickly realized that my focus on reorganizing content was missing the mark. I wanted to learn how to change my approach to teaching so that students in my courses would increase their knowledge of the subject. One possible solution was to make my teaching more learner-centered.

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Assessment at Other Colleges...

The following is excerpted from Thomas Angelo's conference paper entitled "Developing the Scholarship of Assessment: Guidelines and Pathways", 2003 Assessment Institute. It was published in "Engaging and Supporting Faculty in the Scholarship of Assessment: Guidelines from Research and Best Practice." Chapter 10 in T.W. Banta, and Associates, Building Scholarship of Assessment. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2002. Dr. Angelo argues that assessment can be a springboard for scholarship.

Developing the Scholarship of Assessment: Guidelines and Pathways

By: Thomas Anthony Angelo

The Scholarship of Assessment

By all rights, the scholarship of assessment should be an attractive and effective innovation, given that it has the potential to respond to many real widespread needs in higher education. For example, it has long been recognized that most American faculty members do not, in fact, engage in the "scholarship of discovery" - in the traditional disciplinary forms of research that result in publication in referred journals and grants - and that most faculty members both care about teaching and believe that is undervalued. Partly for those reasons, many American universities are now revising or have already revised their retention, tenure, and promotion policies to include a broader conception of scholarship and to reward a broader range of scholarly activities. A likely expectation of administrators and trustees backing these changes is that a greater proportion of the faculty will engage in documentable and meaningful scholarly activities. Thus, while this broadening of options will benefit those faculty

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Assessment Conference Possibilities

Association of American Colleges and Universities, General Education and Assessment, March 4-6, 2004, Long Beach, California.

NCA/The Higher Learning Commission, 109th Annual Meeting, The Distinctive Organization in the Age of Accountability, March 27-30, 2004, Hyatt Regency Chicago.

North Carolina State University's Undergraduate Assessment Symposium, April 16-17, 2004, Embassy Suites Hotel, Cary, NC.

Learner-Centered Teaching and Assessment

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I wanted to learn more about this approach before applying learner-centered assessment tools. I found an excellent book to answer my questions about learner-centered teaching, which included practical applications and a wealth of reference material (even articles for those of us teaching in the natural sciences), entitled Learner-Centered Teaching: Five Key Changes to Practice by Maryellen Weimer, 2002.

My goal has always been to help students develop intellectually and become responsible, motivated learners. To meet this goal, I will focus on four areas this spring: classroom climate, textbook reading, exams, and self-assessment abilities. As a preview, I'll explain how I plan to approach classroom climate in a student centered way. On day one, we will discuss the components that create a classroom climate conducive to learning. Several sheets of newsprint will be mounted on the wall with sentences for the students to complete such as "I learn best when . . ." and "In the best class I ever had, students . . ." The posted answers will be discussed while emphasizing that the students are responsible for maintaining a classroom climate for learning along with the professor. Three weeks into the semester students will complete a sheet of paper with three columns: start, stop, continue. In each column they will describe what we could do to enhance their learning, and what is detracting from the learning, and what is effective for the learning experience, respectively. As part of this follow-up discussion we will identify which aspects of classroom climate produce increased student motivation to learn and to accept responsibility for learning. Ideally, students will see the benefits of certain behaviors and engage in them to promote learning for themselves while enrolled in the course, instead of realizing what they should have done at the end of the semester.

The transition to learner-centered teaching will be gradual, taking several years to implement. Since I will only be adding a few parts of the method, I may give the impression that these are merely new teaching techniques, but they are not. This is a whole new way of thinking about teaching. The next time you catch yourself wondering why you are working so much harder than the students, perhaps you will consider learning more about learner-centered teaching and assessment as methods for promoting deep understanding in your students.

can afford to invest the additional staff and financial resources needed to generate this information through existing institutional research and assessment processes. Faculty engaged in Scholarship of Assessment could help provide such information, along with knowledge and judgment needed to make use of it. And those responsible for assessment, faculty development, and accreditation need effective ways to engage and sustain faculty involvement in these efforts. By engaging large numbers of faculty in applied inquiry, the Scholarship of Assessment could respond to these organizational development needs, as well. Consequently, the Scholarship of Assessment holds great promise for engaging faculty in activities to document and improve teaching effectiveness and student learning quality that are both institutionally and individually valuable.

But promising ideas alone - even ones that meet real needs - are not sufficient to change academic culture, as the past half century of attempts to disseminate innovations amply demonstrates. A short list of promising but largely unrealized reforms might include educational television, programmed learning, master learning, writing across the curriculum, computer-assisted learning, and multimedia instruction

How can the Scholarship of Assessment avoid this common fate? First and foremost, realizing the promise of the Scholarship of Assessment will require that its "champions" recognize and apply lessons learned from previous academic innovations - both successful and unsuccessful - and from the research on the diffusion of innovations more generally. Second, it will require alignment among three key elements: institutional systems, faculty culture, and leadership for change. In other words, it will require a more systematic, strategic, and scholarly approach to innovation. Taking these hard-won lessons seriously can better the odds that faculty will engage and persist in the scholarship of assessment, and thus increase our collective understanding of and capacity to improve student learning.

Developing the Scholarship of Assessment: Guidelines and Pathways (Continued from Page 1)

already engaged in less traditional forms of scholarly activity, it may also impel significant members to develop new skills and interests.

To respond to changed expectations and take advantage of these wider options, many faculty will need training and support in systematic, straightforward ways to do scholarly work on teaching and learning issues. The Scholarship of Assessment can provide such an approach. Academic administrators, in turn, need more valid and useful information on teaching and learning effectiveness for personnel decisions, public relations, program review, and accreditation. But few institutions



ASSESSMENT RESOURCES

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SNC Freshmen and Seniors Compare Themselves to Their Peers

By: Kyle Thompson (SNC/OIE Research Assistant)

There is no doubt in anyone's mind that college students experience immense change from the time we first come to SNC as freshmen until we finally graduate four long years later. Most of us have gained some maturity, have finally recognized some long-term goals, and are basically just more in tune with how the world (both business and social) really works. Some of us have maybe even met that special someone to share the rest of our lives with.

Along with those mentioned above, most of us have experienced some change in our innate abilities as well. Coincidentally, as I write this article, we just happen to have taken a look at how SNC students rate themselves against an average person their age as freshmen and then as seniors. Some of them seem obvious enough. In keeping with the College's emphasis on providing a superior education, more men and women rated their writing ability as "above average" or in the "top 10%" compared to an average person their age as seniors than as freshmen, by 4.7% and 2%, respectively.

We also see ourselves as improving our public speaking ability, as 11.5% more men and 3.3% more women rate themselves higher as seniors. That seems logical enough, given the number of papers and other reports that we must present throughout our four years here.

More men and women also rate themselves higher as seniors on both intellectual and social self-confidence. This goes hand in hand with the basic Pennings philosophy (from the College's mission), and thus is probably just a result of the education we receive and our own experiences in the "real" world.

But along with all the positive experiences we realize, some negatives have to come along. One item that was surprising to me, given the College's emphasis on enhancing each student's spirituality, was that 7.2% fewer men and 7.2% fewer women rated themselves as "above average" or in the "top 10%" for spirituality compared to an average person their age as seniors than as freshmen.

The same occurs with physical health, except on a larger scale. 13.2% fewer men and 15.5% fewer women rated themselves "above average" or in the "top 10%" as seniors. This could be easier to explain, as more people are involved in athletics in high school than in college. Another explanation could deal with how people really perceive "physical health." For some it could mean being in shape, while others may see it as reflecting on how good you look or how good others think you look.

For me, the change in mathematical ability was the one that stunned me the most. Personally, I feel that my mathematical ability is much stronger now than it was as a freshman. I think that I would definitely put myself in the "top 10%" compared to an average person my age, whereas when I was a freshman, I would've thought of myself as average at best. Therefore, I assumed the same for everybody else as well. So you can imagine my surprise when I saw the results. There were 15.7% fewer men and 15.3% fewer women who rated themselves as "above average" or in the "top 10%" as seniors.

Some of the ratings may surprise you; some of them may make you shrug your shoulders, and some of them you might have guessed. To me, most of them were of great interest. It really shows how college actually changes individuals.

So why do our ratings change? Here is my take on it. My guess is that when we came in as freshmen, we were pretty full of ourselves. We thought we already knew everything we were ever going to need to know. I guess college came as a little bit of a surprise. There actually was a lot more to learn than we thought possible, and, as seniors, I think we've finally realized we'll never know as much as we once thought we knew.

Percent SNC Students Rating Self "Above Average" or "Top 10%" ("compared to average person your age") as Freshmen (CIRP) and then as Seniors (Sr. CIRP)

CIRP	Men			CIRP	Women	
	Sr. CIRP	Difference*			Sr. CIRP	Difference*
69.9	73.9	4.0	Academic ability	74.7	72.1	-2.6
24.7	22.8	-1.9	Artistic ability	20.5	22.6	2.1
78.6	75.4	-3.2	Competitiveness	48.0	46.4	-1.6
77.6	76.9	-0.7	Cooperativeness	80.8	76.5	-4.3
57.0	58.7	1.7	Creativity	53.7	53.5	-0.2
75.7	77.7	2.0	Drive to achieve	75.8	78.0	2.2
70.6	67.9	-2.7	Emotional health	54.1	48.3	-5.8
73.9	74.4	0.5	Leadership			
			ability	63.9	62.5	-1.4
53.3	37.6	-15.7	Mathematical			
			ability	43.6	28.3	-15.3
73.5	60.3	-13.2	Physical health	51.9	36.4	-15.5
45.2	51.6	6.4	Popularity	33.5	28.7	-4.8
43.0	54.5	11.5	Public speaking			
			ability	40.2	43.5	3.3
70.2	77.7	7.5	Self-confidence			
			(intellectual)	54.6	56.1	1.5
54.4	70.0	15.6	Self-confidence			
			(social)	43.8	48.5	4.7
62.3	71.3	9.0	Self-under-			
			standing	54.0	56.5	2.5
46.4	39.2	-7.2	Spirituality	46.5	39.3	-7.2
63.8	64.6	0.8	Understanding			
			of others	73.7	69.3	-4.4
52.9	57.6	4.7	Writing ability	55.1	57.1	2.0

*negative (-) number denotes Sr. CIRP < Sr. CIRP (they rated themselves higher as freshmen than as seniors)

Strengthening the College through Assessment & Feedback Annual Performance Report 2002-2003 (Year 2)¹

Section 1: Executive Summary

A1: How has the grant fulfilled the goals of the legislation (i.e. improve academic quality, institutional management, fiscal stability)?

Improvements in academic quality, institutional management, and fiscal stability continued in year 2. The Institutional Effectiveness Team functioned effectively providing assessment plan development and implementation assistance to Academic, Student Life, and Mission & Heritage programs. The OIE Director met with academic, Student Life, and Mission & Heritage program faculty and staff 74 times during year 2. The General Education Review Chair facilitated 25 meetings involving 60 faculty participating in learning outcomes assessment of general studies areas 4, 5, 8, Upper 1, and 12. The Retention Coordinator/Data Analyst met with faculty and staff 62 times. Finally, the Academic Programs and Natural Science Assessment Specialists met with faculty 31 times in support of discipline-based assessment activities.

Assessment capacity continued to increase through OIE support of 14 faculty and staff who participated in 8 national assessment conferences. Twenty-nine assessment projects were authorized and funded (\$63,595) by the OIE. The Institutional Effectiveness Team, the Retention Committee, and the College Assessment Committee met regularly during year 2. The College Assessment Committee devoted its first year of operation to developing a "Plan for Assessing Student Learning Outcomes at St. Norbert College". The plan has been reviewed and approved by the Administrative Advisory Committee, Academic Affairs, Student Life, Mission & Heritage, as well as the Student Government Association. During the summer, the OIE Director and new Dean/AVP met with St. Norbert College's liaison to the Higher Learning Commission in Chicago.

The freshmen diversity student retention rate increased from a baseline of 67% to 81% in 2003. The freshmen overall retention rate increased by 2% to 85%. Analysis of retention data yielded an article published in the *Noel-Levitz On-Line Journal* as well as in *Assessment News*. Retention analyses were expanded to two new at-risk groups (under prepared, underachieving) and the HERI "Your First College Year" and the Noel-Levitz "College Student Inventory" were piloted with sub-samples of freshmen students, including those identified at-risk. Preliminary analyses of these data (in consort with other available data) lead to formation of a "developmental advisement pilot" which began in August.

The OIE continued to elaborate the assessment web site, which became publicly accessible in year 2. It also published 6 issues of an informative newsletter and hosted two external reviews of grant progress (one formal and comprehensive, one informal) in October and April.

A2: How has the grant supported the mission of the college?

St. Norbert College's mission is to "provide a superior education that is personally, intellectually, and spiritually challenging." Development of assessment plans focused on student learning outcomes by all academic and student life programs combined with data collection, analysis, and use of these data to inform program improvement will support the College's mission.

Review of the General Education Program continued in year 2. A General Education Faculty Survey was administered by the OIE. The results were included in a 75 page report consolidating all existing campus data about the performance of the general education program. These data will be used to raise questions as the basis for a comprehensive curricular review beginning next Spring. An assessment plan for the 2003-2004 academic year was adopted by the General Education & Honors Committee.

The Office of Institutional Effectiveness offered 17 targeted assessment workshops in which 206 faculty and staff participated. The OIE hosted two on-campus presentations by nationally recognized assessment leaders (Drs David Ozar & James Nichols) and consulted extensively with a third (Dr. Kathleen Blake-Yancy) on assessment of student writing. Analysis of CSS data produced a study of correlates of student satisfaction. Focus group data with follow-up additional questions in the 2003 CIRP & SNC Current Student Survey were used to clarify the "personal sphere" dimension of the SNC Mission Statement.

The electronic portfolio initiative continues in teacher education. Excluding a few ninth semester student teachers, all certification candidates now have an electronic portfolio appropriate for their stage in the program. Twenty-three Academic and five Mission & Heritage Programs have developed or modified learning outcomes assessment plans and are collecting data. Student Life programs are collecting assessment data based on an overall Student Life Assessment Plan. Eight academic and three Student Life programs have filed reports with the OIE documenting the use of assessment data for program improvement.

¹These paragraphs are excerpted verbatim from the Annual Performance Report submitted to the Department of Education on 12/18/03. They are reprinted here as a Progress Report to the SNC Community.

Apply Now for Assessment Mini-Grants

Mini-grants of approximately \$3,000 are available. Funds may support any of the following assessment activities:

- Carrying out one or more elements of an academic discipline or student life program assessment plan
- Data analysis or report writing
- Elaborating, revising, or developing a discipline or program assessment plan
- Acquiring, administering, or scoring assessment instruments
- Enhancing expertise regarding student outcomes assessment

A copy of the "Request for Funds to Support Assessment Activities" is available on the OIE website: www.snc.edu/oie or by contacting Pat Wery (x3855) in the Office of Institutional Effectiveness.